

E 423

.J67

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00005030262









# SPEECH

OF

MR. J. L. JOHNSON, OF KENTUCKY,

ON

## THE ADMISSION OF CALIFORNIA:

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES, APRIL 8, 1850.

---

Mr. CHAIRMAN: At no period, perhaps, since the foundation of this Government to the present moment, has there ever been a higher degree of excitement, both in this House and throughout the country, than is found to exist at this time in reference to the bill for the admission of California as one of the States of this Union, and the passage of a bill organizing a suitable form of government for the residue of the territory recently acquired by the treaty with Mexico.

In fact, sir, the intense degree of feeling on these subjects, in all portions of the country, admonishes us that, before we take such action in reference to them as shall be decisive, we should thoroughly consider the consequences that may grow out of our legislation, having a due regard to the harmonious union of these States.

Hasty and inconsiderate legislation, even on unimportant subjects, is at all times, and under all circumstances, greatly to be deprecated. But when great questions—affecting the honor, the political and pecuniary interests of nearly one-half of the people of the United States—are thrown upon the legislative arena for consideration, it becomes a matter of the deepest importance for us to bring to the task that lies before us a degree of calmness and reflection commensurate with the importance of the duties that devolve upon us. Passion and prejudice, both of which are inconsistent with reason, should never enter this Hall on any occasion, but more particularly on an occasion like the present. The effect of these, here or elsewhere, is to drive us into extremes; and in the absence of reason they sometimes seduce even the best intellect into the labyrinths of folly—the purest heart from its devotion to correct principle. To say the least of it, such legislation at present, if it should do nothing else, would create much discontent, and necessarily engender many prejudices wholly inconsistent with the harmony of the States, and that sort of equality of right that constitutes the bond of our union.

We, sir, are from different portions of this Union, and to some extent repre-

[GIDEON & Co., PRINT.]

sent different interests, but we are all of us bound by the same general obligation to support our common Constitution in all of its parts.

On questions in which neither the letter nor the spirit of the Constitution is involved, there always has been, and there always will be, found to exist difference of opinion. In matters of this sort it is the duty of each representative to obey the will of his constituents, or resign his seat, and give place to another who will obey the voice of those who invest him with power. But, sir, when it comes to the description of legislation in which we are now engaged, when the effort on the one side is to secure the rights guarantied by the spirit of the Constitution, if not by its letter—and on the other side to usurp those rights in a great measure—I contend that there should be but one voice, there should be but one great animating principle among us, and that should be justice to every portion of the Union. Not that sort of meagre, attenuated justice that seems to be justice, but which really is not. Not a mere limited assent to a great principle founded in justice, but an honest, frank, manly surrender of all that justice in its fullest sense, and the Constitution, when fairly interpreted, demand at your hands. This is what the liberal, the enlightened, the patriotic portion of the American people everywhere want—this is justice—this is in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution. Do this and you will do your duty. Do this and you will restore peace to the country; you will quiet the angry passions that are found to exist, not only in this House, but throughout this whole country, extending from ocean to ocean.

We have acquired a large district of country by virtue of a treaty with Mexico at the close of a war, in which the South and the North equally participated, in which they both displayed equal valor. We are now deliberating on the propriety of admitting California as a State, and as to the form of government that shall be extended to the residue of the newly acquired territory.

The people of California have formed a constitution for themselves, in which they in so many words inhibit the introduction of slavery within the limits of the proposed State. According to the uniform opinion on this subject throughout the South, the people residing in the Territory have the right to settle this question; they have done so, and have sent their constitution here, asking for admission into the Union, by their Senators and Representatives, who are ready to take their seats when the door shall be opened, and California admitted as one of the States of this Union. The objection has been urged by honorable members, that there was no law of Congress authorizing California to form a constitution preparatory to admission into the Union; but, if there is anything in precedent, this objection can have no force, for other States of this Union have done the same thing, and have been admitted. Tennessee, Arkansas, Michigan, Florida, Iowa, and perhaps other States were admitted on the formation of their constitutions, unauthorized by any previous law of Con-

(XFS84)

gress. The practice of admitting States in this way commenced in 1796, when Tennessee was admitted, and has been acquiesced in, to a greater or less extent, ever since.

The Constitution declares that "new States may be admitted by the Congress into this Union," and this, in fact, is the whole power that Congress has over this subject. Congress can admit States, but not create them. We have no power to make a constitution for a State. This must be done by the people residing in the Territory.

But, sir, it has been intimated by honorable members on the other side of this House, that the President, through his agent sent to California, (Mr. Thomas Butler King,) procured the formation of the present constitution interdicting slavery. This charge is not only not sustained by evidence, but is denied both by the President and Mr. King, and I am advised that the Senators and Representatives from California state, that there was no such interference. The truth is, sir, the people of California were left by the last Congress without a government, and they determined to form one for themselves. As was well remarked by my honorable friend from Louisiana (Mr. CONRAD) the other day, it would be a very strange circumstance if the President could make the people of California form such a Constitution as he wanted, and yet could not make them send even one Whig Senator or Representative here to support his administration.

But, sir, there are objections that, in my judgment, may be urged to the immediate admission of California. In her constitution she has specified such boundaries as suited her people; but are the members of this House prepared to say that these boundaries are such as we should approve? In the first article and second section of the Constitution of the United States, it is declared that representatives shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within the Union according to their respective numbers, and provision is made for the enumeration of the inhabitants of the States, having a due regard to this apportionment. No census of California has been taken, and I imagine that no gentleman is prepared to say that she has an actual bona fide population sufficient to entitle her to admission.

She has sent on here two representatives to take their seats in this House. Is she entitled to two or one, or is she entitled to any? I have seen no reliable evidence of the number of her actual inhabitants. These are, in my judgment, valid objections to the immediate admission of California. I recognise the right of the people of that Territory to say whether slavery shall exist there or not; but I do not recognise their right to demand admission into this Union before they have shown themselves entitled to membership; they should first be able to give the pass-word, and when they do this the door should be opened. But, sir, with a precipitancy almost unprecedented in the history of this Govern-



ment, we are asked to open the door and admit this new State, even before we had time to read her constitution and see what it contained.

As a distinct proposition I cannot say that I am very much in favor of the admission of California; but if, in connexion with the bill for her admission, a government without the Wilmot proviso for the residue of the newly acquired territory shall be supported by the North, I am willing to vote for her admission, notwithstanding my objections, because this will be a settlement of the question.

On the subject of the admission of California, and the organization of a suitable form of Government for the residue of the Territory, a contest has grown up between the North and the South—between the non-slaveholding and the slaveholding States of this Union. The North contends that this Territory shall be free—that the Wilmot proviso shall be applied to it. The South contends that she is a part of this Union; that this Territory as much belongs to her as to the North; that they have the same right to take their slaves there that the people of the North have to take any property peculiar to their region; that, in both instances, according to the spirit of the Constitution, the same degree of protection is extended to the one description of property that is extended to the other.

I do not propose to enter into an elaborate argument to show that Congress does not possess the constitutional power to interdict slavery in the Territories of the United States, but will offer a few thoughts on this subject.

I argue, sir, that such interdiction by Congress would be contrary to the spirit of the Constitution, from a fact which I understand to be admitted by every body—that the States of this Union are equal in dignity and in right. The old thirteen States were bound together by the articles of confederation, but, to “form a more perfect union,” they adopted our present Constitution. They asserted in their Declaration of Independence that they were free and equal, which they afterwards maintained, and their sovereignty as States was subsequently acknowledged by England. When the Constitution was formed, therefore, the original thirteen States stood on terms of equality; and that instrument not having been so changed since as to produce an inequality of right either among the States or the citizens of the States, I take it for granted that they are equal in dignity and in right yet. If this argument be correct, I would ask Northern gentlemen if they are administering the Government according to its genius and its spirit—if they are carrying out the intentions of the framers of our Constitution, when they seek to exclude nearly one-half of the people of the United States from a participation in the benefits and blessings which may accrue to them by emigrating with their slaves to a territory, for the acquisition of which they fought as gallantly and bled as freely as the North?

When they come with their interdictions, seeking to appropriate the whole



of this territory, because they may have the numerical force to carry their proposition ; when they seek to increase their own power by diminishing that of the South—to increase their own wealth by diminishing that of the South—I say, when they thus come, not in the name of justice, nor in the name of that equality of right that belongs to all of the States, but in the disgusting name of might, of power, of numbers, think you that they are then administering the Government, so far as legislation is concerned, according to the spirit of the Constitution? On the contrary, are they not destroying the sovereignty, the equality of the States, and consequently violating, with an *outstretched* arm, the very Constitution which they profess to revere, and under whose protection they have been blessed and shielded from injustice for the last sixty-three years? But even if Congress possessed the constitutional power to exclude slavery from the residue of this newly-acquired territory, I deny that they have the moral power to consummate an act of such manifest injustice. The Constitution of the United States was formed to “establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare,” &c. Sir, how can the North, according to their manner of construing the Constitution, “*establish justice*,” when the very course of policy which they propose is fraught with the most flagrant injustice to more than 7,000,000 of freemen, constituting the entire Southern portion of this Union? How can they “*insure domestic tranquility*” to the country, when the very end which they avow to be their chief object will have a direct tendency to add fuel to the flame which Northern fanaticism has already kindled and fanned, until the Hall in which we meet from day to day is so filled with heat and smoke as to induce the fear, here and elsewhere, that the conflagration has already commenced, and that ere long we shall see the temple wrapped in flames? How can they promote “*the general welfare*,” when the very interdiction which they propose consults not “*the general welfare*,” but the *welfare of the North to the manifest dishonor and detriment of the South*? They cry out, “Constitution,” “Constitution;” “let us stick to the Constitution”—and yet they violate, with an incorrigible indifference, the very preamble to that instrument, because they refuse to “*establish justice*” when they hold the scales in their own hands and have it in their power to do so. They refuse to “*insure domestic tranquility*,” when they have it in their power to “pour oil on the troubled waters,” and quell the strife and discontent that threaten the harmony of these States. They refuse to “*promote the general welfare*,” when they have it in their power to settle this question in a manner in which “*the general welfare*” will be properly consulted. They say this territory is already free; that, by the laws of Mexico, slavery was abolished there before we acquired it; and yet, in a wild spirit of fanaticism—in an unholy lust for the gratification of sectional prejudices—they leap over the legitimate

bounds of justice, of equality, of every thing in fact that belongs to ordinary courtesy and propriety, to say nothing of State sovereignty, and usurp the despotic prerogative of declaring a country to be free which they say is already free, when they know very well that such declaration is aggressive, and must have the effect to arouse the indignant feelings of the South. Is it not enough, if what they say is true, that the country is already free? Is it not enough, if what they further say is true, that nature's God has laid a proviso on that territory more potent than that which bears the name of *Wilmot*? If, as they say, God and the laws of Mexico have dedicated this territory to the "*Free-soilers*," why do they seek to do a work of supererogation? Why build a mud fence to protect a fortress which they say is impregnable? Why not organize a territorial government for New Mexico and the residue of the territory not embraced in the bounds of California, without the *Wilmot* proviso, and let the people of the South test all these barriers to the introduction of slavery of which Northern men speak?

But, sir, what is the object of this wholesale crusade against slavery? A gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. STEVENS) came out boldly in a speech here a few days since, and avowed his object; and, I suppose, in avowing his, he avowed the object of all those who are in favor of the interdiction of slavery in the newly-acquired territory. He said his object was to confine the institution of slavery in its present limits, and ventured the prediction that if it were thus confined, in twenty-five years the States that now tolerate would abolish it. Sir, can it be possible that honorable members who avow these objects would willingly expose the slaveholding States to the alternative of surrendering up fifteen hundred millions of dollars worth of property, or seeing their fertile, their highly cultivated, their beautiful lands crimsoned with human gore? Can it be possible that northern fanaticism has gone thus far? They seek to do by indirection what they acknowledge they have not the constitutional power to do directly—abolish slavery in the States. Is this no infraction of the spirit of the Constitution? The gentleman speaks of surrounding the slave States with a cordon of freemen, to witness, I suppose, with exultation, the fierce conflict between the slave and his master. Why not go one step further, if this be his object, and with his cordon of freemen cross the line, avow himself the champion of the slave, *break* the fetters that bind him, and make the bondman the peer of his master? An enterprise of this sort would at least have the merit of boldness and decision, and the people of the South would know exactly how to meet it. Established by Divine authority, the institution of slavery is destined to remain until the end for which it was first ordained shall be accomplished.

Alas! what stay is there to human state?  
Or who can shun inevitable fate?  
The doom was written, the decree was past,  
Ere the foundations of the world were cast.

Sir, suppose the honorable gentleman's object to be fully accomplished—suppose the slaves of the South to be emancipated—they could never associate upon terms of equality with the people of the South; the people of the North, I am persuaded, would never so receive them. They could not be clothed with all the immunities of the white man, and while they would thus be nominally free, they would be the vilest of all slaves, the slaves of their own wicked passions. They would never be clothed with the elective franchise in the South; they could never hold office there; and it is not probable that in the North they would be invested with more rights than in the South. A marked inequality would still exist. What, then, would still be the condition of the black man? Deprived of the privilege of the elective franchise, cut off from all equal social relations with the white man, incapable of holding any office of honor, he would have no incentive to the practice of those virtues that lead to the elevation and advancement of man.

“Lean abstinence, dark grief, and haggard care,  
The dire attendants of forlorn despair”—

would be his constant companions; and these would be more dangerous to his present and future happiness than the fetters which he now wears. Abolish the institution of slavery, turn the slaves loose in our midst, and you unsheath the sword which will never again be returned to the scabbard until one of the two races shall be exterminated.

An honorable member from Ohio, (Mr. CAMPBELL,) in a speech here a few days since, said that the grand reason why he wanted to prevent the extension of slavery was, that it is “a moral curse” to the slave and his master. It is a very high evidence of that gentleman's goodness of heart, for him to manifest such extraordinary interest in the affairs of the South, as to come all the way to Washington to warn all those who tolerate the institution of slavery, that a great “moral curse” is resting and abiding with and among them. I think I have read somewhere, that it was the custom of some nation, when any very melancholy event had transpired, for those who were affected by it, to procure the services of some one possessed of a very sympathetic heart to be the chief mourner, and thus relieve themselves from all unhappiness by throwing their griefs upon another. The honorable gentleman has taken the office of chief mourner on himself voluntarily, and is found weeping over the “moral curse” that is now resting on the slaveholding States. But, sir, before he exhausts all his sympathy, I would advise him to make a trip through Kentucky and see the condition of the slave. He will then be better able to see whether his sympathy is needed, whether the “moral curse” of which he speaks is found to exist as the necessary concomitant of slavery. If he will go there, instead of finding the slave manacled and exposed half-clad, as he has seen him represented in abolition papers of his own and other free States, he will find him



well clothed, living in a good, comfortable cabin, with every thing around him necessary to his personal comfort. He will find more, sir ; he will find upon our statute book a law made to protect the slave against improper treatment, the purport of which is, that severity shall not be tolerated from the master, and when the fact is established, his slave shall be taken from him, and placed where he will be properly cared for and protected.

Mr. CAMPBELL said, (Mr. JOHNSON yielding the floor :) I did not speak of slavery as a "curse" from personal observation of that institution, for I have never resided where it exists. I quoted the opinions of Washington, Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and other slaveholding statesmen of the revolutionary times. I would now add another for the honorable gentleman's benefit. I quote from memory from the first speech I ever read, made by a distinguished slaveholder when I was but a boy. In 1827, HENRY CLAY closed a most eloquent speech on the subject of slavery by saying : "If I could be the instrument of relieving the revered State of my birth, (Virginia,) and the beloved State of my adoption, (Kentucky,) of this *foul curse*, I would not exchange my honors for the proudest laurels ever worn by Roman conqueror." This, it will be remembered, is the same CLAY who has ever since that time been Kentucky's standing candidate for the highest office in the nation's gift ; and in support of whom, since these sentiments were uttered, the honorable gentleman and other Kentucky orators have discoursed eloquently to the people from almost every stump in Ohio and Kentucky. If, in denouncing slavery as a "curse," I have offended the honorable gentleman, I throw the responsibility upon Washington, Jefferson, and other slaveholding statesmen who are no more, and upon HENRY CLAY, and other living statesmen of the South, whom the country has honored. I will only add, in adopting their opinions, that "where such men lead, who dares not follow ?" I would be glad to know from the honorable gentleman whether he considers it a curse or a blessing ?

Mr. JOHNSON. I do not consider it a curse to the slave.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Then I am surprised that the gentleman's philanthropy does not induce him to insist on the repeal of all laws prohibiting the slave trade.

Mr. JOHNSON. In 1775—the date of the opinions of Washington, Jefferson, and Patrick Henry, on the subject of slavery, as quoted by the gentleman—there were but few slaves in this country, and slave labor was but poorly understood. Then slavery could have been abolished without detriment to either race ; but now that the slave population is greater than the white and black population was in 1775, it could not be abolished without ruin to both races, as I have before intimated. But I can inform the honorable gentleman that history would seem to indicate that Washington had changed his opinion afterwards, for he presided over the convention that formed and adopted our present

Constitution, in which they not only provide for the continuance of slavery for all time, but provide for the continuance of the *slave trade* for twenty years, for the avowed purpose of increasing the number of slaves in the country. The North and the South voted for this. *The North imported the slaves*, and the South bought them. The North wanted the money for them—the South wanted their labor. I think, therefore, that the motion to repeal the laws inhibiting the slave trade would come better from the *philanthropic North*, since they seem to have more experience in this work than the South. The gentleman speaks of the opinion of the great statesman of Kentucky, Mr. CLAY. The world knows Mr. CLAY's opinions on this subject. But, sir, the gentleman is very inconsistent, for where such patriots as Washington and Clay lead, *he will not follow*. Washington was the president of the convention that formed our Constitution, where slavery is recognised and the slave trade is encouraged. Mr. CLAY is for the admission of California, and in connexion with the bill for her admission will vote to organize a government for all the rest of the newly acquired territory *without* the Wilmot proviso. Now, sir, adopting the gentleman's motto, I say to him, "Where such men lead, who dares not follow?" It is admitted that Mr. CLAY is in favor of emancipation; but this question in Kentucky last summer was settled by an overwhelming majority in favor of the continuance of the institution of slavery as it now exists. It is not regarded by the people of that State as a "moral curse."

It has ever been an exceedingly strange thing to me how it is that these gentlemen of the North are so generally found sympathizing with the condition of the South. They are always found advising the South to abolish slavery. They are always found opposing its further extension, and they do it all in the name of humanity. This is a very broad humanity that can embrace not only all of their own objects of sympathy within their own States, but, influenced by a spirit of philanthropy as boundless as the universe, they exhort the South to escape from the "moral curse" which they say is ready to overwhelm them. They point them to the portentous cloud which they say is ready to sweep over and destroy them. They urge them to tarry not for a moment, but to escape with all possible speed from the direful scourge which they say is coming with the *celerity* of lightning—a scourge whose author is God, whose end is the destruction of those who tolerate the institution of slavery. Sir, by what motive are these gentlemen influenced in exhorting the South to turn from slavery? Why are they so very solicitous on this subject? If slavery is a "moral curse," the curse will fall on the South, and not on the North. If it is an evil in any sense, the consequences of it must fall on the community in which it exists, and not on that in which it does not. Why, then, are they so much concerned? They say that they are happy and prosperous; we of the South are rejoiced to hear it, because we are members of the same great

national family, and in some sort "flesh of their flesh, and bone of their bone."

They point us to their great cities, their beautiful farms, their golden harvests, their garner filled with the products of their labor, and say that these proclaim to the world that they are great and prosperous. We of the slaveholding States, in reply, tell them that we, too, have great cities, beautiful farms, and that cornucopia is also in our land. But instead of rejoicing with us, as we do with them, they seek to diminish our prosperity, they refuse to allow us to extend the area of our labors, because they say a great "moral curse" is upon us. If the people of the South complain that Northern policy deprives them of that just equality to which they are entitled, according to the spirit of the Constitution, they are gravely told that a great "moral curse" is upon them. If they say to the North, we poured out our blood, we spent our treasure, and exhibited our prowess, as freely as you did in acquiring this territory, and in the name of that equal justice that constitutes the glory and boast of our Constitution, we demand the right to enter this territory with our slaves, there to remain in security until such time as the people residing there shall determine that slavery shall no longer exist among them; they are gravely told that they must submit, because a great "moral curse" is upon them.

For many years this spirit of aggression has been gradually developing itself. Congress was first petitioned to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, and the people of the South were then told that such petitions were only gotten up by a few fanatics of the North, and that the better plan would be to receive and refer them to appropriate committees. But not contented with this, they have petitioned Congress to abolish slavery in the forts and arsenals of the United States, where they are located in slave States; thus, in both instances, affording a place of retreat for the slave, even in the midst of a slaveholding community. The abolition of slavery in these places would not only be in bad faith, even if Congress possessed the power, but would create a degree of excitement throughout the entire South, which, in my humble judgment, if it should not be attended with more serious consequences, would create prejudices and bad feelings that it would take whole ages to eradicate. Laws had been passed in many of the free States to enable the master with greater facility to take his slave when he should escape from labor; these laws were passed in aid of the law of Congress on this subject. Most of the free States have recently repealed these laws, and in one State (New York) an effort was made, directly in the face of the Constitution and the law of Congress, to force a bill through the legislature imposing a heavy fine on any citizen of that State who should lend his aid to the master in taking his slave. In many instances slaves have been aided in making their escape. Sometimes



they have been induced to run off; and now the *contemptible* and dishonorable machinations of Abolitionists have reached such an incorrigible degree of lawless impudence that but few gentlemen, when travelling, will take a servant with them if they expect to pass through a free State.

A member from Ohio, (Mr. GIDDINGS,) in a speech here the other day, denied that any law should be passed to secure the right of the master to his slave when he escapes from labor. The power to pass such a law is expressly granted by the Constitution to Congress; and yet, at this late day, when the courts of this country have passed judgment on this question favorable to the right of the master over his slave when he escapes from labor, wherever found, the member from Ohio, directly in the face of the repeated decisions of the highest judicial tribunals of this country, is found openly and unblushingly advocating a flagrant violation of the spirit of the very Constitution which, when he took his seat in this House, he was sworn to support. That gentleman may be well satisfied with his own opinions, but his ethics will never suit the South.

I understand that New Mexico has formed a government to suit her people, in which there is nothing said on the subject of slavery; leaving this question to be settled when she comes to form a constitution preparatory to admission into this Union. Why not adopt some such form of government for the whole of the territory not embraced in the boundaries of California, and pass it in connexion with the bill for her admission? How can the North object to this? California has made for herself a constitution in which she inhibits slavery. Northern gentlemen are exceedingly anxious to admit her. New Mexico has made a form of government to suit herself, in which nothing is said as to slavery. Well, now, it seems to me that if gentlemen from the free States intend to be consistent, if they intend to deal fairly with the South, if they intend to act upon any principle that is reconcileable with that equality of right, that even-handed justice which the Constitution was formed and adopted to secure, they must now come up like patriots and statesmen, and say to us by their actions, if not by their words—we are all of us members of this great national family—we all of us look to the same Constitution for the security of our property and for the protection of our liberty—we desire to respect your rights, because you are American citizens, bound to us by the ties of interest, of patriotism, and of affection, too holy to be discarded, too strong to be severed; and although we are opposed to the institution of slavery, yet it is recognised by the Constitution of the United States. This territory as much belongs to our brethren of the South, and to their institutions, as to us and to our institutions; therefore let justice be done—let us organize a government for it without the Wilmot proviso, and if slavery goes there by the voice of the people, let them have it when they shall form a suitable constitution and ask admission

into the Union. If under such a system of legislation the institution of slavery shall die, let it die; but if, on the contrary, it shall not die, but continue, as it has hitherto done, to develop the resources of the country to which it is adapted, in the name of justice, in the name of peace, in the name of that harmonious spirit of concession and compromise which actuated the fathers of our Republic when they formed and adopted our Constitution, in the name of the glorious old Ship of State, which for more than sixty long years has borne us in security and in triumph above the angry waves of faction that have lashed about her prow, and sometimes swept harmlessly over her deck, let us join together, subdue the factious spirit that has kept us asunder, and in a spirit of compromise restore peace to the country.

Gentlemen from the North have it in their power thus to tranquillize the country. Some few of them have already manifested a determination to do so. If the entire North would come up in the same patriotic spirit, the difficulties that now hang over the country, and fill the public mind with apprehension for the safety of the Union, would be dissipated in an hour; peace would be restored to the country, and this session of Congress shortened many months.

I, sir, have full faith in the wisdom and patriotism of the President; and in expressing myself in favor of the immediate passage of a bill fixing a suitable form of government for the residue of the territory not embraced in the bounds of California, I do not consider that I am opposing his recommendation. My object is to provide a government for a people who are in a measure without a government. I am for accomplishing immediately what the President seems to think time is necessary to effectuate. There is no difference, therefore, in the principle maintained in his message on this subject and that which I am advocating—the only difference is as to time. I think, sir, we owe it to the people of the Territory to give them a government; they need protection, and I am for extending it to them. I am willing to know the worst before this session of Congress closes. Yes, sir, if the Wilmot proviso is to be applied to this territory, I am willing, I am anxious to know it, before California is admitted; for although I will vote for her admission if in connexion with that bill, I can vote to organize a suitable government for the residue of the territory without the Wilmot proviso; yet if Northern members are determined to vote in California, and then to force the proviso on this territory, they will have to accomplish their object without my vote, for I will not vote for the present admission of California under such circumstances.

If it were possible to carry a proposition of that sort, I should be in favor of some such compromise as that made when Missouri was admitted. I prefer it in fact, because it is a much shorter method of settling the difficulty; but it seems to be the opinion of everybody, north and south, that no such compromise, in this House, would receive the support of one solitary Northern gentle-

man, and it would therefore be lost. The next best settlement of this question is found in the admission of California in connexion with the organization of a government for the residue of the territory without the interdiction of slavery. When the people of the territory come to form a constitution for themselves, and ask admission into the Union, they can then tolerate or inhibit slavery, as to them may seem *meet*. Neither the South nor the North would then have cause to complain. The South asks not the North to lend her power to force slavery on a people who are opposed to it. The North should not seek to exclude slavery from a people who are in favor of it. The only true principle, therefore, under present circumstances, is to let the people residing in the territory settle the question when they come to form a constitution preparatory to admission into the Union.

It seems to me that the "sober second thought"—the returning sense of right and of justice among Northern representatives—must bring them to this conclusion. If this should turn out to be the case—if, as representatives in the American Congress from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, we can meet in a spirit of concord, around the altar of justice, of equality, of patriotism, and of liberty, and settle this exciting question to the satisfaction of the country—we shall not only disappoint foreign speculation and foreign prognostication, but restore peace to our own country, and add another to the many evidences that our fathers have already exhibited, that man is capable of self-government.

Sir, there has been a good deal said about the dissolution of this Union, and, although I regard not such an event as being possible, yet it is fit that we should pause and see whence this disorganizing spirit comes. Judging from the tone of some northern speeches here, one would suppose it all came from the South. But, sir, it has been fostered and nurtured in the bosom of northern fanatics, as I shall attempt to show by the speech of Wendell Phillips, of Boston, who is a leading Abolitionist. This speech was made in the city of Boston last May, at an Abolition meeting; and I put it to you sir, to this committee, to the country, if any such disorganizing spirit as this has ever come from the South, not only during the present time of excitement, but since the foundation of this Government. But, sir, hear what this *Free-Soiler* has to say for himself, for his party. "*We confess that we intend to trample under foot the Constitution of this country; we call upon you to do likewise. Shall I tell you why? You can never make a revolution in this matter until you make the common sense and the consciences of the people superior to their statute books; until you arraign against the despotism of the majority the conscientious convictions of the mass of the minority, whatever it be.*" This, sir, is the language of one of the sober, patient, thinking men of the North, belonging to the Free-Soil party. But hear him further. "Daniel



Webster says you are a law-abiding people; that the glory of New England is, that it is a law-abiding community. Shame on it, if this be true; if even the religion of New England sinks as low as its statute book. But I say 'we are not a law-abiding community. God be thanked for it.' This, sir, is the language of northern fanaticism, fulminated against the Constitution and laws of this country, against the union of these States. This is the spirit of disunion unmasked; but, sir, it can find no sympathy in the South. Will the North frown it down? If you do not, it will continue to increase until it spreads over the country to such an extent as to render this glorious Union a thing no longer to be desired.

But, sir, this same northern abolition disunionist, fearing, I suppose, that his principles might be forgotten, came out in a pamphlet the other day, the title of which is, "A Review of Mr. Webster's Speech on slavery," and in this publication, speaking, I suppose, for himself and for his party, he says: "We are disunionists not from any love of separate confederacies, or as ignorant of the thousand evils that spring from neighboring and quarrelsome States, but we would get rid of this Union, because experience has shown it to be in its character and construction an insurmountable obstacle to the harmony of the nation; and could we once

'Cancel and tear to pieces this great bond  
Which keeps us pale'

with continued apprehensions, we should get space for such a structure as would insure the harmony of all the races which dwell on this continent, and all the States that control it—an empire, ocean-bound on every side. With these views Mr. Webster has no sympathy." He has not, and God forbid that he ever should. It is left to fanatics, and those engaged in a corrupt struggle for power, to entertain these opinions in a community where they suppose that sort of pandering will secure promotion. Let it not be said that the disunion spirit of which we have heard so much comes from the South, when the mouth-piece of the Abolition party claims that credit for his party.

Sir, the eyes of all Europe are now turned to our country. They have read the proceedings of the present Congress, and their papers are filled with comments on them. The monarchies and despotisms of the world would be rejoiced if our deliberations should terminate without restoring peace to the country. They would hail the intelligence of the dissolution of this Union as the precursor of anarchy and confusion, perhaps of ultimate despotism. Their tottering crowns would then become more secure. I believe that the disunion of these States would be attended with the most calamitous results, not only to this country but to the cause of human freedom throughout the world. I believe that it would be followed immediately by a border warfare, whose termination no man now living would be able to see—a war between friends, countrymen, and brothers. I do not believe that the people anywhere are in favor of dissolution.

I am sure that Kentucky is not. I know the character of her citizens; I know their unfeigned devotion to the Union; they have exhibited it on more occasions than one, and when the tocsin shall again be sounded, adopting the sentiments of the great statesman of Massachusetts, their slogan will be, "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable." They are thoroughly opposed to the "Wilnot proviso," but heart and soul in favor of the Union. They believe this question will be settled to the satisfaction of the country. They believe the honor of the South will be secured, her constitutional guaranties respected, and the Union preserved. Looking to these results, they cherish no disunion sentiment. Avoiding all extremes, they look to the preservation of their honor and the Union of these States as paramount considerations. Invoking the same God who stood by our fathers and enabled them to establish this Government, to preserve it until time shall cease, and all human governments shall be dissolved, they will say, "God palsy the hand that touches the first pillar of this Union to displace it." This is the light in which Kentucky regards this Union; it is the light in which she will ever regard it, unless northern fanaticism shall gather more strength and come forth with power to dishonor her; then, and not till then, will she hoist the flag of disunion.

And, sir, if she should ever be forced to take up the sword in defence of her honor, it will be wielded by her sons as long as there shall be one stalwart arm left to deal a blow. But, sir, I like not to contemplate such a result as this. I believe there is yet patriotism enough in the land to save the Union. I believe that the God of our fathers—your God, Mr. Chairman, and my God—will so overrule our affairs as to bring order out of confusion, peace out of rife, and the blessings of union from the spirit of anarchy that stalks in our midst. May such be the case; and when time shall cease, may those who, in the providence of God, shall inhabit this land, be permitted to say to our fathers in eternity, that the government which they established was only dissolved when the proclamation was made that time should be no more!











WERT  
BOOKBINDING  
Grantville, Pa.  
Jan Feb 1989  
We're Quality Bound



